

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 6-12, 41-51 and 56-57 without prejudice.

Please amend the remaining claims as follows:

ES 52. (Amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence which encodes a protein, wherein said protein comprises a SOCS box which comprises an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO: 52 or SEQ ID NO: 55, or an amino acid sequence having at least about 70% similarity to SEQ ID NO: 52 or SEQ ID NO: 55, and wherein said protein suppresses cytokine-mediated signaling.

53. (Amended) The isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 52, wherein said protein is further characterized as comprising an amino acid sequence as set forth in any one of SEQ ID NO: 4, SEQ ID NO: 10 or SEQ ID NO: 12, or an amino acid sequence having at least about 50% similarity to any one of SEQ ID NO: 4, SEQ ID NO: 10 or SEQ ID NO: 12.

54. (Amended) An isolated nucleic acid molecule comprising a nucleotide sequence as set forth in any one of SEQ ID NO: 3, SEQ ID NO: 9 or SEQ ID NO: 11, or a nucleotide sequence which hybridizes under low stringency conditions to any one of SEQ ID NO: 3, SEQ ID NO: 9 or SEQ ID NO: 11, wherein said low stringency conditions comprise at least about 1% v/v to at least about 15% v/v formamide at least about 1M to about 2M salt for hybridization at 42°C, and at least about 1M to about 2M salt for washing, and wherein said nucleotide sequence encodes a protein which suppresses cytokine-mediated signaling.

55. (Amended) The isolated nucleic acid molecule of any one of claims 52-54 or 68-70, wherein said nucleic acid molecule is derived from mouse, rat or human.

ES 58. (Amended) The isolated nucleic acid molecule according to any one of claims 52-54 or 68-70, wherein said cytokine is Interleukin-6.

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59. (Amended) An expression vector comprising the nucleic acid molecule of any one of claims 52-54 or 68-70.

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62. (Twice Amended) An isolated protein comprising a SOCS box, wherein said SOCS box comprises an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO: 52 or SEQ ID NO: 55, or an amino acid sequence having at least about 70% similarity to SEQ ID NO: 52 or SEQ ID NO: 55, and wherein said protein suppresses cytokine-mediated signaling.

63. (Twice Amended) An isolated protein comprising an amino acid sequence as set forth in any one of SEQ ID NO: 4, SEQ ID NO: 10 or SEQ ID NO: 12, or an amino acid sequence having at least about 50% similarity to any one of SEQ ID NO: 4, SEQ ID NO: 10 or SEQ ID NO: 12, and wherein said protein suppresses cytokine-mediated signaling.

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67. (Amended) The isolated protein according to claim 62 or 63, wherein said cytokine is Interleukin-6.

Please add the following claims:

E12

68. An isolated nucleic acid molecule consisting of a nucleotide sequence which encodes a protein, wherein said protein comprises a SOCS box which comprises an amino acid sequence as set forth in SEQ ID NO: 52 or SEQ ID NO: 55, or an amino acid sequence having at least about 70% similarity to SEQ ID NO: 52 or SEQ ID NO: 55, and wherein said protein suppresses cytokine-mediated signaling.

69. The isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 68, wherein said protein is further characterized as comprising an amino acid sequence as set forth in any one of SEQ ID NO: 4, SEQ ID NO: 10 or SEQ ID NO: 12, or an amino acid sequence having at least about 50% similarity to any one of SEQ ID NO: 4, SEQ ID NO: 10 or SEQ ID NO: 12.